

Give your child a great start in life

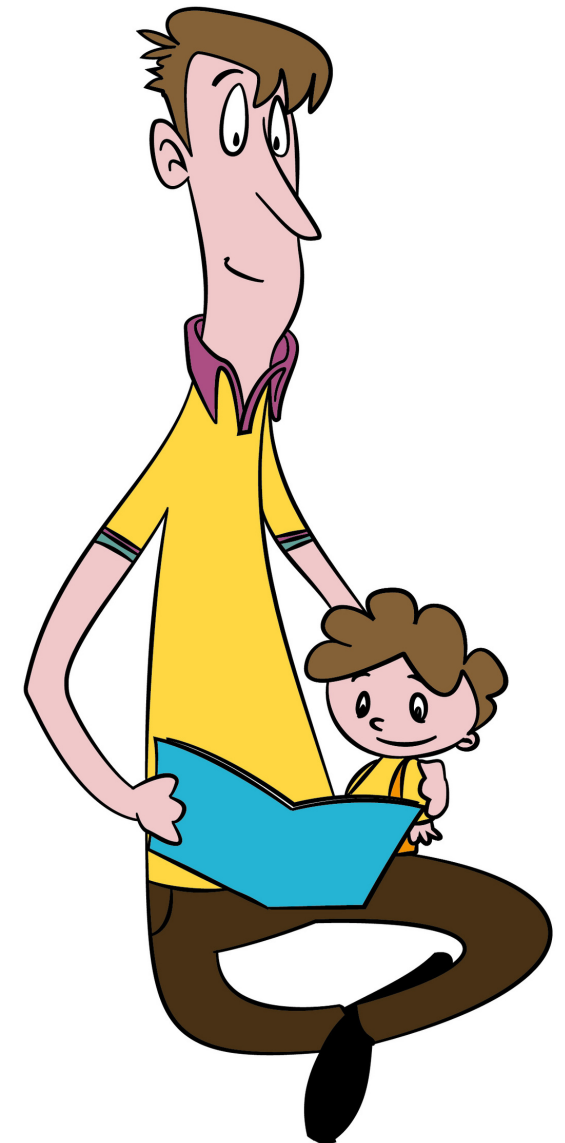


“The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being from obesity, heart disease and mental health, to educational achievement and economic status.”

Michael Marmot, Fair Society, Healthy Lives, 2010

“Poverty is the lead driver of inequalities... leading to worse physical and mental health outcomes, educational attainment, and lower lifelong economic productivity. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this situation worse.”

Pickett K., Taylor-Robinson D., et al, 2021, The Child of the North: Building a fairer future after COVID-19, the Northern Health Science Alliance and N8 Research Partnership



Executive Summary

Sheffield is a great place to grow up and our new Early Years Strategy, “Start for Life Sheffield”, sets out how we will work together across the Early Years workforce to give all Sheffield children the start for life that they deserve. Setting out our ambitions from pre- birth to school life will support all children to have equality of opportunity to be healthy, happy and safe.

As the future adults and parents of Sheffield, we will strive to make a positive difference to children’s lives in the city and support them to reach their potential. The “Our Sheffield Delivery Plan” (2022/23) has a vision for Children and Young people:

“Every young person in our city deserves the opportunity to be happy, safe and to have the opportunities to lead a fulfilling life and reach their potential in a rapidly changing world. A high-quality education (starting from Early Years and going through to apprenticeships and further and higher education) is a critical element of this and working hand in hand with schools and colleges, we want to make sure that every young person gets the education that they need to help them succeed. But it’s about more than education – it’s about making sure that young people are safe and happy.”

Our new Start for Life Sheffield Early Years Strategy launches at an exciting time for the city, with the introduction of our Family Hubs and Start for Life offer which will further strengthen and enhance support and services in the Early Years. We are committed to the delivery of high-quality Early Years services, early identification of need and the right support at the right time.

Events of recent years including the Covid-19 Pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis continue to impact on children and families in the city. Early research tells us of the potential for negative impact on child development and whole family outcomes, however the full impact is yet to be known. This adds to the importance of ensuring good quality Early Years services, support and resources are available to families in Sheffield, with equality of access for those needing help and advice.

The 2023 to 2028 Start for Life Sheffield Early Years Strategy has been developed following extensive data and intelligence gathering, and discussions with parents and carers, professionals from the health and education sector, and also care providers working across the Early Years landscape. We have listened and ensured that what we have heard has helped us to develop our strategic ambitions.

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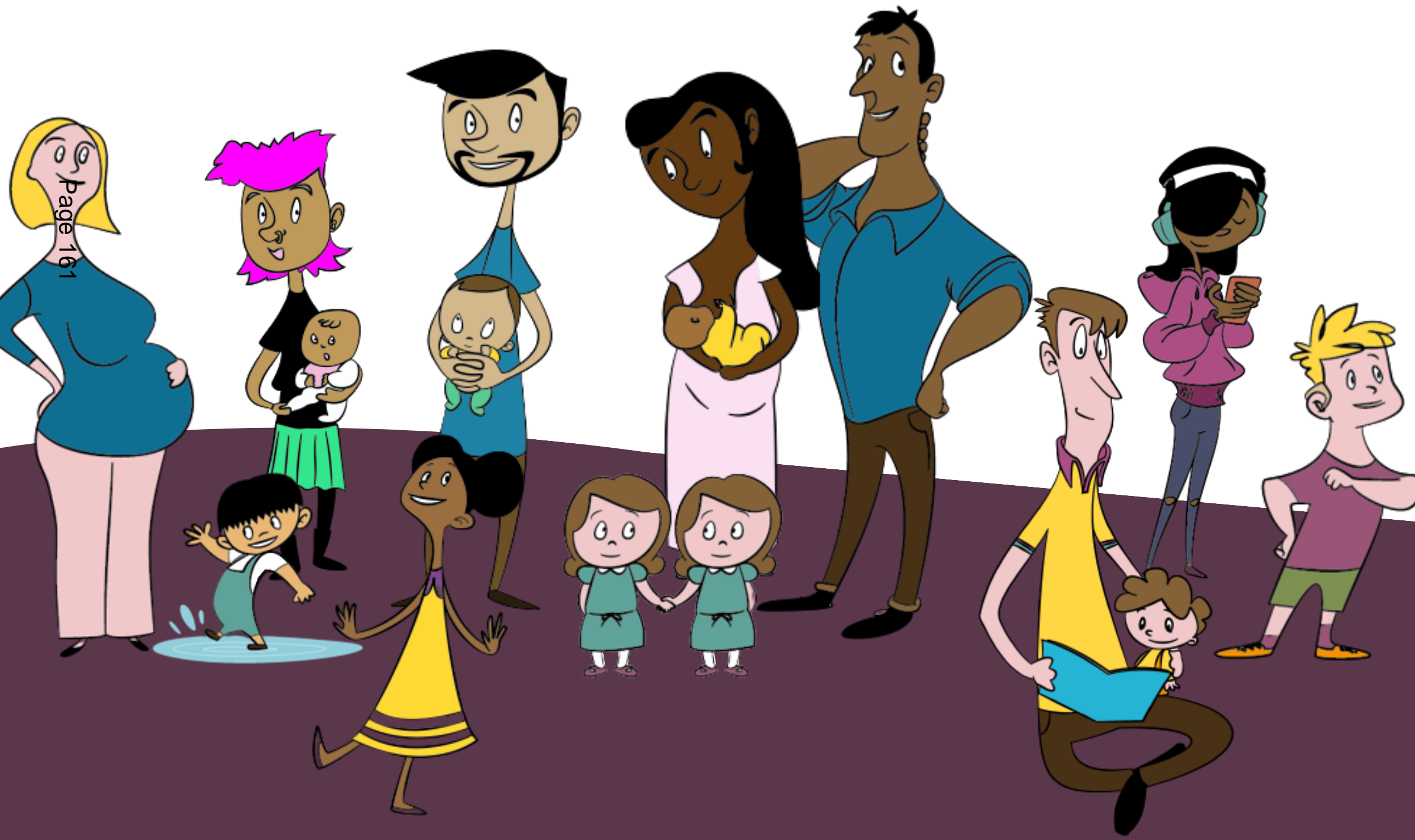
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SECTION A: The Purpose of the Strategy



A.1 Why We Have An Early Years Strategy in Sheffield

Sheffield families face difficulties as a result of the impact of the Covid Pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis which may impact negatively on the health and wellbeing of our youngest citizens. It is important that we revisit our priorities and approaches to supporting Early Years Children and Families by developing an entirely new 2023 – 2028 strategy for the Early Years that will continue to drive improved outcomes for Sheffield’s children.

This Strategy sets out a high-level overview of how we need to work together to achieve our ambitions. There are new developments around Early Years both in place now, and planned for the coming years. For example, changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the introduction of Family Hubs and the Start for Life Offer, a new Infant Mental Health Pathway for the city, and Maternal Cultural Safety developments all of which aim to improve the life chances of young families in our city. We need to factor in the impact of all of these developments on the ambitions in our new strategy. There are many other strategies, plans and programmes of work which we will take account of and align to when implementing this strategy, and many of the actions contained within those plans will impact positively on our ambitions. As such we need to draw the extensive activity and ambition for Sheffield’s Early Years children and their families into one vision:

Children’s experiences during their early years are likely to shape the rest of their lives, whether it is their attainment at school and in turn their future job prospects, through to their long-term health outcomes.

Sheffield’s Strategy for Early Years is to work together, through city wide sector engagement in all early years initiatives and strategies to support parents to provide Early Years children with the best possible start to their life. Our overarching ambition is to ensure our Early Years children have happy, healthy, childhoods leading to improved outcomes for Sheffield’s future adult population.

The strategy will support us to ensure that the importance of Early Years and our vision for our youngest citizens acts as a golden thread throughout our planning, policy making and good practice development for children and their families in Sheffield.

The strategy covers children and their families from pregnancy through to 5 years of age. Getting a good start in life and throughout childhood, building resilience and getting maximum benefit from education are important markers for good health and wellbeing throughout life (Evidence into action: opportunities to protect and improve the nation’s health and NHS Five Year Forward View). Good health, wellbeing and resilience are vital for all our children now and for the future of society.

The Strategy has been led by Early Years and Early Help Commissioning and has engaged parents, carers and partners from across the Early Years system, including Early Years Childcare providers and Health partners. The process of developing the strategy has built upon the existing recognised strengths of the Early Years partnerships in the city to identify priorities and those areas where we could collectively improve outcomes.

Following consultation, stakeholder involvement remains a priority in terms of development and oversight of the strategy via a governance structure which aligns Family Hubs and Start for life within the overarching governance structure for children and young people.

A.2 The Commissioning Approach

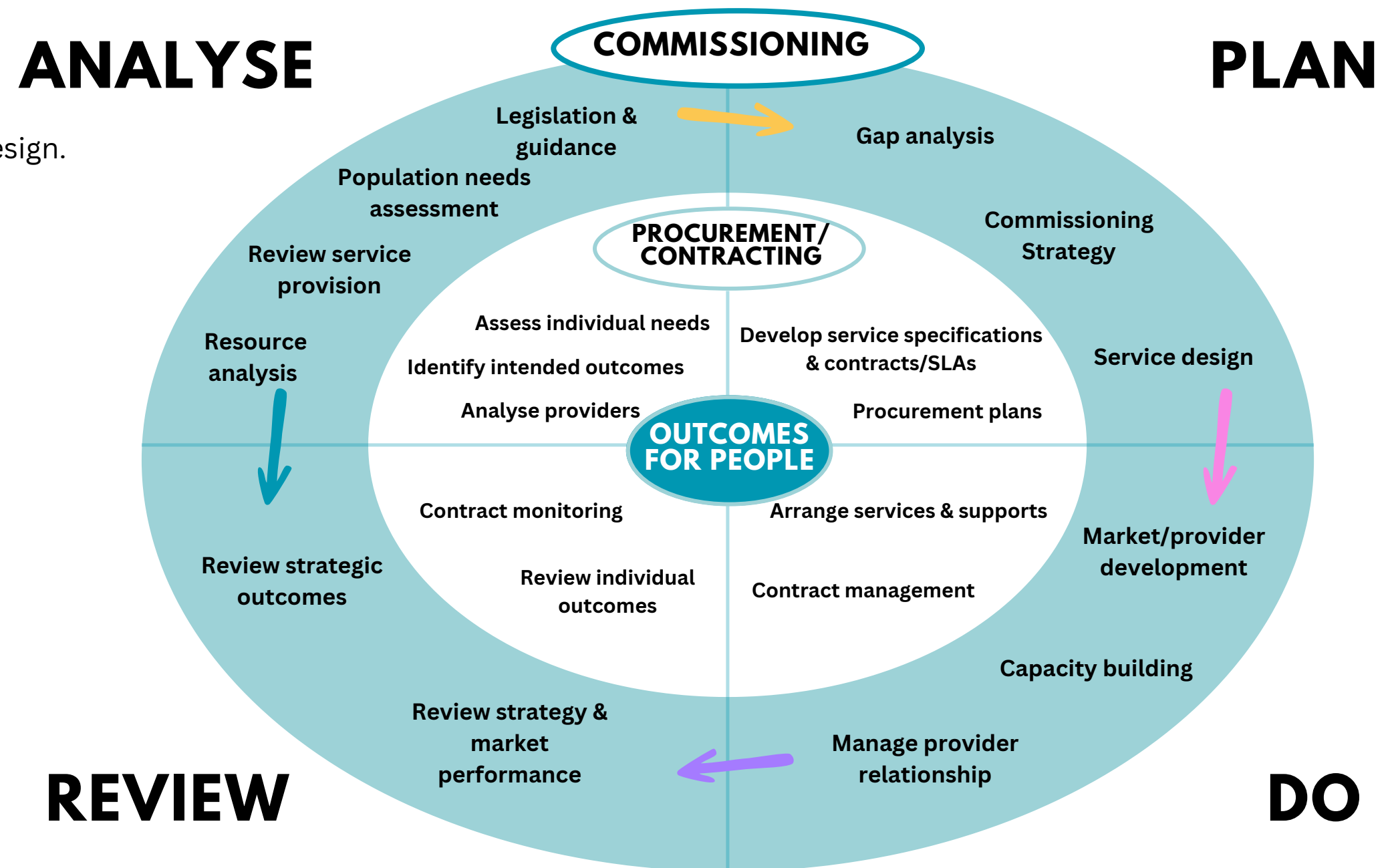
This document sets out the current needs in Sheffield and describes links with the overall strategic direction in the city. It has been produced in partnership with families and those working in the Early Years sector.

The strategy provides a context for our aims and ambitions for pregnant mothers, babies and children and their families. It also clearly links joint commissioning and delivery across Education, Health and Care and is central to the Early Help ambitions in the city.

In Sheffield we follow a commissioning cycle consisting of:

- Analyse: activity and resource assessment.
- Plan: gap analysis, commissioning strategies and service design.
- Do: service delivery and provider working.
- Review: outcome and performance analysis.

This cycle is summarised in this diagram:



A.3 Achievements In The Great Start In Life Strategy 2019 – 2023

In the March 2020 Great Start in Life Strategy we identified a number of areas for development. These were:

- Implement further action across all sectors including childminders to assess early developmental delay and effectively support children identified with additional needs
- Use area intelligence and available data to ensure Family Centre activity meets area needs in terms of school readiness and Speech and Language
- Develop family centre activity and links to ensure the offer encompasses all ages and supports the needs of vulnerable families
- Engage in activity to increase the take up of 2-year Free Early Learning (FEL) in areas of the city where take up is low
- Actively promote the benefits of integrated 2-year-old reviews with all partners and gain commitment from all partners to improve Sheffield's performance in this area
- Increase referrals from PVI sector into the Partnership Process and Family Intervention Service (FIS)
- Review the process of allocation of Early Years SEND support funding to settings to enable full take up of FEL provision entitlement for children with SEND
- Identify and deliver on priorities for developing high quality speech and language services in early years' settings
- Standardise transition processes at key points for children most notably when starting reception
- Work towards ensuring every private provider is equipped to deliver high quality Special Education Needs provision through the support of an in- house SENCO with a nationally recognised professional qualification by September 2019
- Develop closer links between Family Centres and Libraries to enable activity to promote sharing books.
- Add capacity to the workforce trained in Baby Incredible Years
- Review city wide workforce needs in training on areas that impact on school readiness.

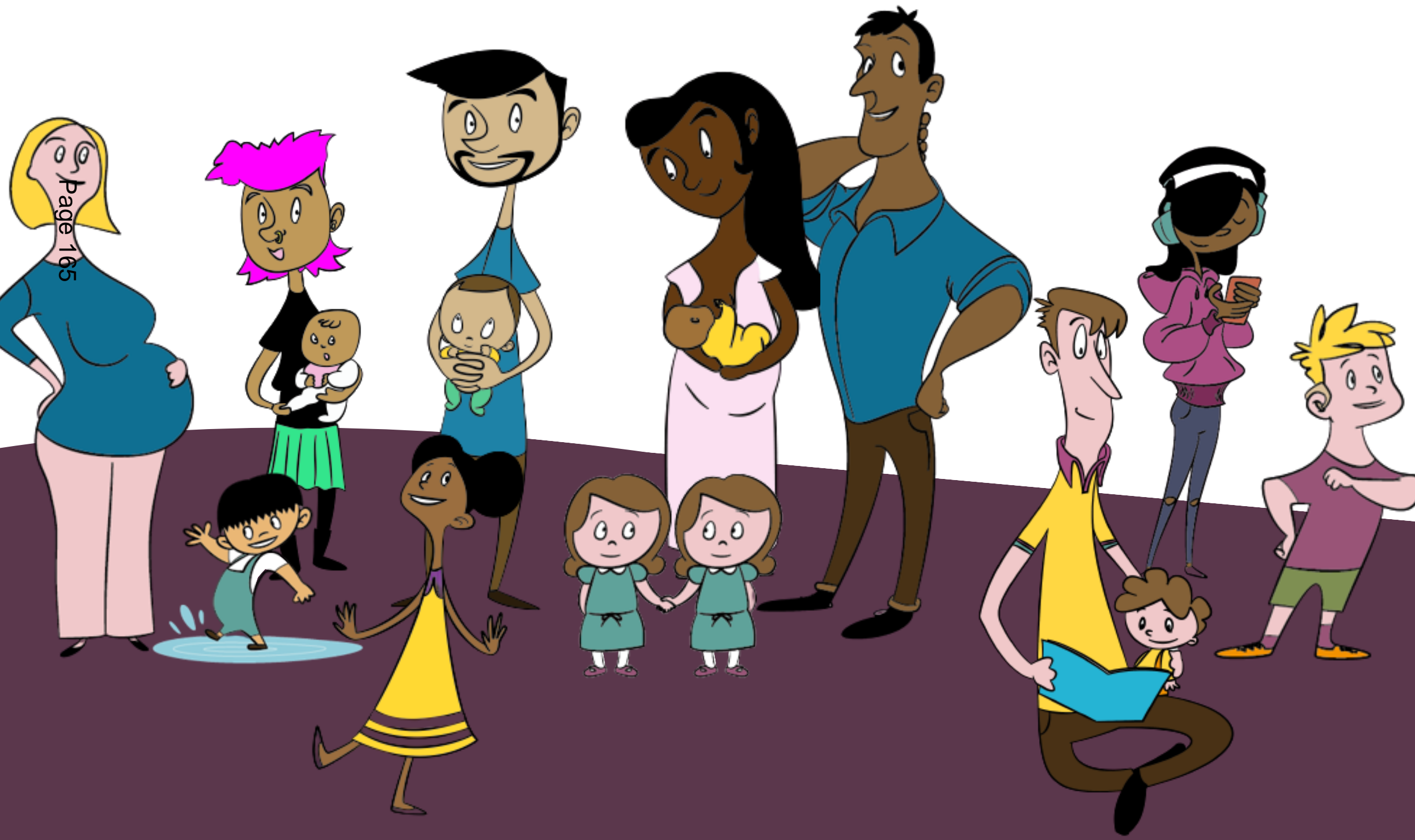


We achieved much that we can be proud of.

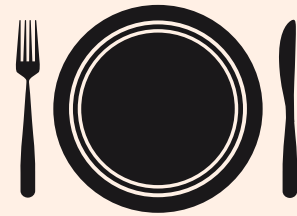
Of 63 actions within the action plan, we were able to partially or fully deliver on 71%.

The achievements are detailed on Appendix A.

SECTION B: Context



B.1 The City Picture



Sheffield has a high proportion of nursery and primary children claiming Free School Meals. Whilst rates of eligible children have increased regionally, nationally and for our statistical neighbours, Sheffield has consistently had the highest percentage of primary aged children, eligible and claiming for Free School Meals, since 2013.

Primary pupils eligible for Free School Meals in Sheffield in 2022 was measured at 32.40% which compared to 25.10% in the Yorkshire and Humber region, 28.26% in statistical neighbours and 23.10% in England as a national average. This placed Sheffield's ranking as 125th in local authorities (2).



Teenage pregnancies in Sheffield were counted at 50 during the measurement period of 2021/2022, this gave an average of 0.9% of the qualifying population, the national average for England was determined to be 0.6%. Sheffield's teenage pregnancy rate was higher than the national average (1).

Teenage births can result in health consequences; children are more likely to be born pre-term, have lower birth weight, and higher neonatal risk, while mothers can experience greater rates of post-partum depression and are less likely to initiate breastfeeding (Chen X.K et al. teenage pregnancy and adverse birth outcomes: a large population based retrospective cohort study. Int J Epidemiol. 2007) (Kingston D, et al. Comparison of adolescent, young adult, and adult women's maternity experiences and practices. Paediatrics. 2012).

Teenage mothers are more likely to live in poverty and have children who frequently experience health and developmental problems (Hoffman SD, Maynard R. Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs & Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy, 2008).



Oral health in Sheffield is poor compared to national averages. Each year around 340 children (0-5 years) in Sheffield are admitted to hospital because of tooth decay. This is high compared to the national averages of 220. This was worked out by crude rate per 100,000 (aged 0 to 5) for three financial years ending 2021 (5).



93% of 3 & 4-year-olds are benefiting from funded early education in Ofsted rated good and outstanding placements (2).



There are 32,212 children under the age of 5 in the city (6). Of these around 25.1% are classified as disadvantaged, higher than the national average of 18.7% (7).



25% of the population in the district are from black and minority ethnic communities (9).



In Sheffield, 1715 2-year-olds are in funded early education (2).

B.1 The City Picture

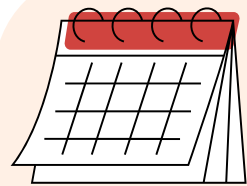


Sheffield has the highest breastfeeding rate, in Yorkshire and Humber (11). As a city we have worked hard to offer support to women who want to breastfeed. In the Sheffield Health Profile published in March, 2023 it shows 68.3% of new-born's born in 2021 received breast milk as their first feed. By 6 to 8 weeks after birth, 54.0% of mothers are still breastfeeding (5).

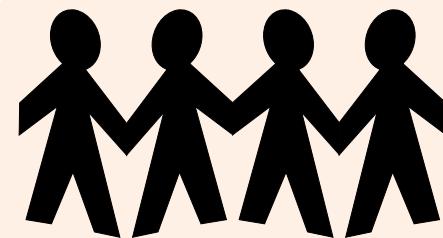


Sheffield has a higher-than-average number of children with low birth weight. Although there is a broad range of growth, health, and developmental outcomes across the cohort, as a group they generally have higher rates of growth concerns, illnesses, and neurodevelopmental problems. These problems increase as the child's birth weight decreases. With the exception of a small minority of low-birth-weight children with significant disability, the developmental outcomes for most low-birth-weight infants include mild problems in cognition, attention, and neuromotor functioning. Long-term follow-up studies conducted on children born in the 1960s indicated that the adverse consequences of being born low birth weight were still apparent in adolescence and adulthood. Adverse sociodemographic factors negatively affect developmental outcomes across the continuum of low birth weight and appear to have far greater effects on long-term cognitive outcomes than most of the biological risk factors (Hack, M, Klein, NK & Taylor HG, 1995, Long-term developmental outcomes of low-birth-weight infants).

In 2021/2022, the smoking status at the time of delivery was counted in Sheffield at 499, which equated to 9.4% and compared to an average in England of 9.1% (1).



A baby born in Sheffield today would live on average 78.6 years (male) or 82.4 years (female) (4). For males this is 1.2 years less and 0.7 years less for females than the national average values. The national average is 79.4 years for males and 83.1 years for females (5). Within the city, there is significant variation in terms of health inequality.



The looked after rate in Sheffield in 2022 was 59 per 10,000. This has increased from 53 in 2020 and 57 in 2021. Despite the increase, Sheffield still remained below the regional and national average with their averages being 81 and 70 per 10,000 respectively. Both regional and national averages also increased between 2020 and 2022 (2).

Sheffield currently has 656 Looked After Children, this has decreased from 666 in 2022, and again from 674 in 2021.



6509 children were referred to children's social care in Sheffield in 2022. This is 1075 more than in 2021 (2). The number of referrals and demand on social care is

rising every year. Comparatively, our statistical neighbours only received 4358 referrals on average, although this had also increased from the year previously.



39.6% of children in Year 6 are classified as overweight or obese in Sheffield (2022). This is worse than the average for England which stands at 37.8% in the same year. Regional and statistical neighbours have a rate of 39.2% and 39.34% respectively (2).

B.1 The City Picture



In 2020/21, there was an increase in family homelessness; evidence shows that children experiencing homelessness are more likely to have poor mental health and poorer social and language skills than their peers with secure housing.

During this time frame, 692 homeless presentations in Sheffield were cited as being due to domestic abuse and 58% of these had dependant children.



The price of food and non-alcoholic beverages rose by 17.4% in the year to June 2023. [Food and energy price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

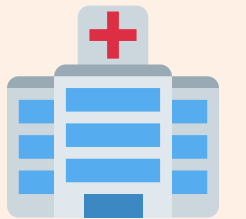


Sheffield is the 57th most deprived district out of 317 in England with over a quarter of children living in poverty (3).

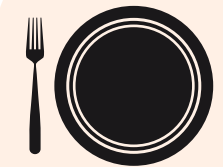


Sheffield has a higher proportion of children under 16 living in relative poverty than the national and regional. In 2020/2021, there were 24,060 under 16's in Sheffield in absolute low-income families which comprised 22.7% of the measured population. This is compared to the 15.1% national average for England. During the same measurement period, the number of children under 16 recorded as in relative low-income families was 28,029, equating to 26.4% of the population which measured against an average for England of 18.5% (1).

The number of children (aged 0-14) living in Sheffield and admitted to hospital because of an unintentional or deliberately injury is 62.7 per 10,000 (2021). Since 2013, Sheffield has consistently seen lower rates per 10,000 than in comparison to the regional and national averages and also our statistical neighbours (2).



The most deprived fifth of the population would need to spend 50% of their disposable income on food to meet the cost of the Govt's recommended healthy diet. [The Broken Plate | Food Foundation](#)



21% of households with children reported that children were directly experiencing food insecurity [Food and You 2 | Food Standards Agency](#)



97% of snacks marketed at babies and toddlers feature a health claim on the front of the packaging despite often being high in sugar. [Bite Back 2030](#)



Evidence shows children who experience domestic abuse in their families are more likely to go on to develop poor mental health and have behavioural difficulties. The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) introduced into law that when domestic abuse is happening in a family, children should be regarded as victims of the abuse in their own right. In 2019 -2023 12,710 children were accommodated in refuges nationally. Out of the total 692 homeless presentations as a result of domestic abuse 42% received support following their application. The Sheffield Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment Data estimate that there would have been between 25,973 and 28,334 children affected by domestic abuse in Sheffield in the last year (8).

B.2 National and Local Context

See Appendix B for detail

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021)

Childcare Act 2006.

Early Years SEND Developments

Sheffield Childrens NHSFT Clinical Strategy

Delivery Plan (Maternity and Neonatal) 22/23

Children Act 2004

Tackling Inequalities in Early Childhood

Sheffield's Health and Care Partnership (HCP)

Maternal Cultural Safety Developments

Sheffield's Childrens Early Help Review

Family Hubs and the Start for Life Offer (2022)

The Sheffield HCP Children and Young People's Wellbeing Delivery Group

Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Early Years Strategic Plan

Tobacco Control Strategy

Children's Early Help Strategy

Speech and Language Review

All Age Mental Health Strategy

The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days

Inclusion Strategy

The Food Strategy

Sheffield City Council Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2023

The new Infant Mental Health Pathway Development (Ongoing from April 2022)

Sheffield's Early Years School Readiness Ambitions (2022 Review)

Maternity Health and Wellbeing

Sheffield Parenting Hub

The Single Delivery Plan (Maternity) 2023

Early Years: a crisis in affordability and sustainability

Pre-Birth Pathway

Sheffield Tackling Poverty Framework 2020 - 2030

Oral Health Strategy

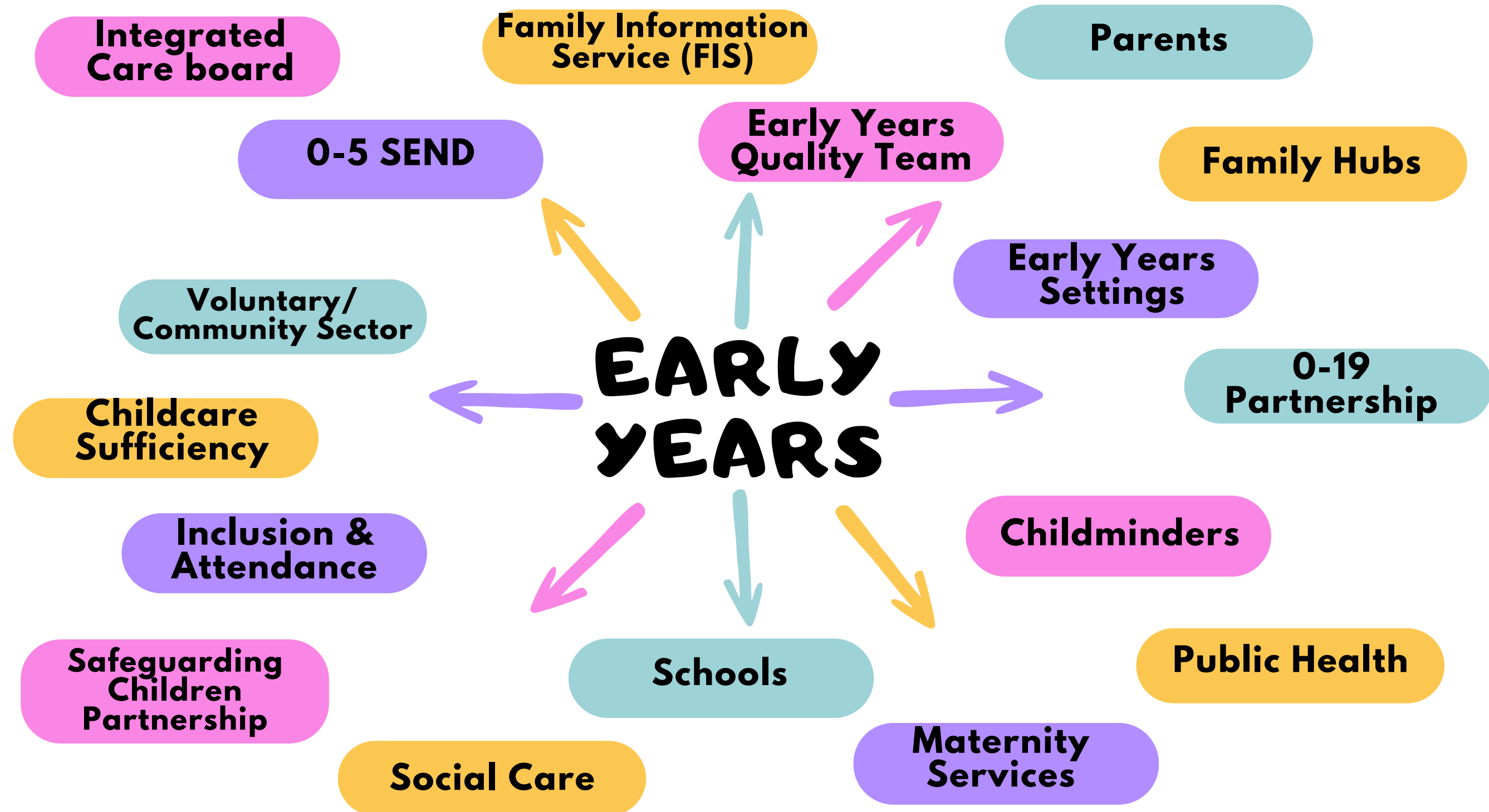
Healthy Child Programme

Infant Mortality Strategy

Sheffield All Age Autism Strategy 2023 to 2026.

B.3 Sheffield Early Years System

Throughout this Strategy we talk about the Early Years System. By system we mean parents, children and everyone who works with Early Years children and families, either in an employed or voluntary capacity. Parents and their children are the most important part of this system and how we support parents can have a significant impact on the whole life chances of our youngest children. Parents and carers are important partners in the design, planning or development of services for Maternity and Early Years. Other people and organisations who are part of the system include:



B.3 Sheffield Early Years System

There are organisations groups and individuals in the city who do not work directly in Early Years and childcare but who work with or on behalf of families and have an interest in children having a good start in life. For example the Police, The Youth Offending Service and employers along with Sheffield's Elected Members because with a long-term view, there is a significant incentive to invest in the Early Years. Working together across the Early Years System to support the health and learning of young children is a critical economic and educational development strategy. The UK economy depends on having a pipeline of talented, educated employees with the skills needed in today's work environment .

Whilst we cannot ignore the current financial pressures both locally and nationally, by working together, adapting our approaches, further developing joint commissioning, coproduction and joint planning, we can maximise efficiency of resources available in the city. We want to use this strategy to describe the ways that everyone who works in the Early Years System can work more effectively together to support and better meet the needs of families.



Sheffield City Council has specific legal responsibilities within the Early Years System:

- Ensure there is sufficient childcare available in Sheffield
- Ensure that there are Family Hubs that are accessible to all families with young children providing targeted evidence based interventions for those families in greatest need of support
- Provide information, advice, and assistance to families.
- Secure information, advice, guidance, and training for childcare providers
- Support improvement in the quality of childcare
- Ensure that all children have access to up to six terms of high-quality nursery provision, as reflected in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, from the term after their third birthday
- Ensure sufficient and high-quality childcare is available for all 2-year-olds eligible for 'Free Early Education Entitlement funding' and will need to be extended to meet the requirements of the Government announcement in March 2023 regarding an increase in Funded Early Learning for children from 9 months
- Meet the childcare needs of families with children over the age of five through out of school care and provision for children and young people up to the age of 14 (or to 25 for children with disabilities)
- Safeguard and promote the welfare of all children throughout all aspects of the work of Early Years and Childcare with specific regard to ensuring that Early Years and Childcare providers understand their responsibilities and are accountable for their practice
- Ensure that all providers delivering funded early education places meet the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice 2015
- Participate in the identification and planning for the needs of children with SEND, including coordinating joint commissioning arrangements across Education, Health and Social Care and in other legal duties related to Education, Health and Care Plans and Preparing for adulthood



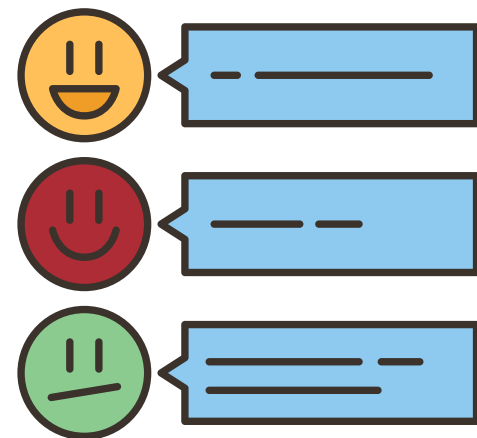
B.4 What Do People Tell Us About The Sheffield Early Years System?

Please see Appendix C & D for the detailed feedback from both Parent and Professional's Consultations

The Early Years consultation was undertaken over a 6-month period and launched at the Early Years Event held in October 2022. 96 city-wide Early Years practitioners, partners, and professionals gathered to have their say, share successes, and begin to shape future Early Years Strategy through collaborative co-production.

At the Early Years consultation event, it was agreed, via a democratic process, that there should be a name change for the new 2023 Early Years Strategy, the name agreed was "Start for Life Sheffield", The Start for Life Sheffield Early Years Strategy is reflective of our city and our families, informed through cross sector consultation with parents, carers, state, private, voluntary and the community sector.

Following the Early Years Event, the on-line consultation survey was launched for both parents/carers, professionals, and community partners. Paper versions were made available, and we worked with local partners to share the survey via key sites providing ease of access and inclusivity.



Start for Life



C.1 Our Ambitions

Our ambitions have been identified as a response to what the data tells us, and the feedback received from parents and partners. This information has told us what needs to improve in the city in terms of our support for children and families in the Early Years.

Our success as an Early Years system in reaching our ambitions is reliant on the progress of related strategies and plans as detailed in Section B2.



Ambition 1

Children and their families achieve their potential with support from an Early Years system that is connected to Communities, understands the needs of Sheffield Families and responds to needs and themes by working together across organisations.



Ambition 2

We work in collaboration with Early Years childcare and education providers to meet the Government's 2023 promise of 30 hours of free childcare per week for eligible working parents with children aged nine months to three years by September 2025.



Ambition 3

We mitigate the effects of inequality, poverty and disadvantage on babies' and children's Safety, Health and Development and we support parents and families to be healthy and maintain good health.



Ambition 4

Families of and Children with SEND or Complex Health Needs are well supported from the earliest point and receive seamless support throughout all transitions in early life.



Ambition 5

Parents are supported and enabled to provide the best possible start in life for their children

C.2 Our Ambitions in Detail



Ambition 1

Children and their families achieve their potential with support from an Early Years system that is connected to communities, understands the needs of Sheffield Families and responds to needs and themes by working together across organisations.

What we want to see:	What we need everyone to do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners have shared ownership of this Strategy and will commit to the advancement of its ambitions. • All partners and parents are respected for their contribution and feel that their voice is heard. • The development of the Early Help System is enhanced through locality delivery. • Coproduction, collaboration and joint planning are used to ensure we are achieving the maximum value from all resources and are providing services which meet the needs of children and families. • Our Early Years ambitions are achieved through planned high quality workforce development across the Early Years System. • The training and development offer to the Early Years workforce is joined up and coordinated between the different agencies. • Workforce development demonstrates a positive impact, which is measured by improved outcomes for children and positive inspection outcomes across Health and early education provision. • Good communication exists across the Early Years System to share good practice, and update on development. • An Early Years response that is equitable and meets the needs of the diverse communities in Sheffield. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners in the Early Years System to recognise their role in the success of the strategy ambitions and sign up to this Strategy. • All partners to understand the role of others and to actively seek out opportunities to work together, to identify and support families in need of help or advice. • All partners to recognise, value and actively seek the contribution of parents and partners in making all of our Early Years services the best that they can be. • All partners to promote each other's Early Years Services to ensure parents have full knowledge of the help and support available. Particularly with regard to services which are accessible within local communities. • Practitioners to be enabled to engage in workforce development opportunities not only within their own professional field but across the wider Early Help and Early Years System to develop further understanding of the roles of other agencies and to further understand the help and support available. • All Early Years practitioners to create and take advantage of networking opportunities and promote and share their own good practice.

Related strategies/plans and activity:

Sheffield Inclusion strategy

0 -5 SEND development

Speech and Language Review

The Sheffield City Council Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2023

The Food Strategy

Early Years: a crisis in affordability and sustainability

The Single Delivery Plan (Maternity) 2023

Delivery Plan (Maternity and Neonatal) 22/23

Healthy Child Programme

Early Years SEND

Sheffield SEND Plan

Early Years Strategic Plan

The Pre-Birth pathway

Sheffield All Age Autism Strategy 2023 to 2026

All Age Mental Health Strategy

Sheffield's Early Years School Readiness Ambitions

Tackling inequalities in Early Childhood

Family Hubs and the Start for Life Offer (2022)

Maternity Health and Wellbeing: National Maternity Transformation Programme

Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days

Sheffield Parenting Hub

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021)

Sheffield Childrens NHSFT Clinical Strategy

C.2 Our Ambitions in Detail



Ambition 2 We work in collaboration with Early Years childcare and education providers to meet the Government's 2023 promise of 30 hours of free childcare per week for eligible working parents with children aged nine months to three years by September 2025.

What we want to see:	What we need everyone to do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are sufficient Early Years places in settings and childminding to meet the needs of working parents and those wanting to access funded entitlements. • All settings are inclusive and capable of meeting the diverse needs of all children and means that children can attend their parents preferred setting. • We effectively support Early Years childcare providers to maintain good quality provision and provide higher levels of support to those needing to make improvements in quality. • We provide effective support to settings to manage the impacts of the cost of living crisis and in post pandemic recovery. • Parents have the information they need to help them to find the right childcare and education setting for their child and they know where to go to get the advice they need. • More families, especially those within vulnerable groups, are accessing Funded Early Learning (FEL) for their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with providers to support increases in access to Funded Early Learning places in areas of the city which are oversubscribed. • To work together as an Early Years System to support the sector to address the issues arising from the Covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis by raising the profile of the issues facing the sector with Elected Members, Leaders and National Government and collectively seeking out innovative solutions to impact positively on the issues. • See all our promotional activity and resources from the point of view of parents to ensure that we are using all media and means to reach families within all communities. • Ensure access for families with communication difficulties, where English is not the households first language, and where access to digital information is not accessible. • Increase the uptake of Disability Access Funding to support settings to accommodate and improve access for children with SEND. • Work together to ensure that 0 – 5 SEND support funding is accessible and proportionate to need. • Raise the profile of Funded Early Learning (FEL) opportunities across the city, providing quality information on suitable early education.

Related strategies/plans and activity:

Sheffield Delivery Plan
22/23

Early Years Strategic
Plan

Sheffield SEND Plan

Early Years SEND

Sheffield's Early Years School
Readiness Ambitions

Sheffield All Age Autism Strategy
2023 to 2026

Early Years: a crisis in
affordability and sustainability

Sheffield Inclusion
Strategy

C.2 Our Ambitions in Detail



Ambition 3 We mitigate the effects of inequality, poverty and disadvantage on babies' and children's Safety, Health and Development and we support parents and families to be healthy and maintain good health.

What we want to see:	What we need everyone to do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are providing leadership in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, especially for those children in care. • A strengthened focus on earliest identification of need with timely and targeted interventions. This includes supporting vulnerable families to stay together and preventing children from going into care. • Those working with parents from the antenatal period onwards are skilled and have the confidence to have culturally competent conversations with parents about how the family is impacted with regard to economic and social disadvantage. Joined-up action is taken by all partners including communities to ensure these needs can be addressed • We are all able to provide support, signposting and help to families in need through our understanding of the help available to Sheffield Families who are struggling in the current economic climate. • Parents know that there is help available and where to find it. • The services, help and support available to families is accessible to all including families with protected Characteristics and at no financial detriment to the family. • We use data and intelligence to inform where service is delivered to ensure a proportionate offer and services are targeted at those most in need. • Improved parent and infant relationships. Expectant parents, especially those with complex social needs or multiple vulnerabilities, are supported prior to conception, throughout pregnancy and during the early years with a focus on perinatal and infant mental health. • The early years workforce is confident and competent to delivery key oral health messages to parents to support a reduction the prevalence and severity of tooth decay in Sheffield children. • Children have access to physical play opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work together to ensure all children, including those who are Looked After, have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), eligible for free school meals, or have English an additional language, achieve a good level of development. • Further improve our links across agencies and organisations to ensure all those supporting families are knowledgeable in terms of where to go for economic help, support and advice including access to foodbanks, benefits advice, and employment support. • Work together to ensure the provision of fully accessible and inclusive high-quality offer delivered at the earliest opportunity that is both with and of the communities served. • To expect the best and go the extra mile to support every child and young person, especially those who are in care. • Further develop our information sharing arrangements around themes arising in areas to fully understand demand and where services should be targeted. • Ensure planning and delivery of services is considerate of community and cultural needs and is engaging to local families. • Champion maternal and infant mental health to support the secure attachments needed to thrive. • Role model practical parenting skills and support. • Ensure key oral health messages and signposting to dental health services are part of conversations with parents. • Access appropriate oral health training opportunities. • Increase our awareness across health, care and education staff about ways to support and encourage healthy living and physical activity.

Related strategies/plans and activity:

Children's Early Help Strategy

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021)

Delivery Plan (Maternity and Neonatal) 22/23

Sheffield Tackling Poverty Framework 2020 - 2030

All Age Mental Health Strategy

Sheffield Childrens NHSFT Clinical Strategy

Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Sheffield City Council Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2023

The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days

The Pre-Birth pathway

The Food Strategy

Oral Health Strategy

Sheffield Parenting Hub

Sheffield's Health and Care Partnership (HCP)

Family Hubs and the Start for Life Offer (2022)

Tackling inequalities in Early Childhood

Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies

Early Years: a crisis in affordability and sustainability

Sheffield's Children Early Help Review

Healthy Child Programme

The Single Delivery Plan (Maternity) 2023

Sheffield All Age Autism Strategy 2023 to 2026

Infant Mortality Strategy

C.2 Our Ambitions in Detail



Ambition 4

Families of and Children with SEND or Complex Health Needs are well supported from the earliest point and receive seamless support throughout all transitions in early life.

What we want to see:	What we need everyone to do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition across the system is well managed, contributed to by a high level of trust between partners and there is professional respect across all sectors of the Early Years System. • Parents are recognised as key contributors to their child’s development, and their concerns are listened to and acted upon. • There is clear and up to date information on support for SEND which is accessible to parents. • Support for babies and children with SEND is accessible and provided in a timely way. • Early Years professionals discuss concerns regarding children’s development with parents and with 0–19 services. • Integrated Health and Education reviews take place for those children whose development or health is of concern. • Earliest identification of Families and Babies with the potential to have complex health needs. • Families who may need support to access services such as annual health checks, mandated reviews, developmental assessments or activity groups have the help that they need. • Seamless and well-informed transitions for those children starting school, especially those who have complex needs or multiple disadvantages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop our partnerships to improve parental access to good quality advice and support in health and SEND. • Provide targeted activity to identified groups who are most in need of support. • Ensure of planning and delivery of services and support for SEND is considerate community and cultural needs and is engaging to local families. • We need everyone who works with babies and Early Years children to be alert to those who may need extra support and to ensure that those children are able to access the extra support that is available. • We need Early Years professionals who feel a child may need additional help to talk with parents about their concerns. • Actively listen to parental concerns regarding their child's development and needs. • Continue to support and promote community healthy living and physical opportunities, activity groups and facilities to be accessible for parents and children including those with a learning or physical disability, severe mental illness or autism.

Related strategies/plans and activity:



C.2 Our Ambitions in Detail



Ambition 5

Parents are supported and enabled to provide the best possible start in life for their children.

What we want to see:	What we need everyone to do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternity Services and partners work together to ensure the needs of women and birthing partners who have complex social factors are identified and they have improved access to the care and support they need. • Parent are enabled to recognise their children’s developmental milestones so that if they feel that their child may have a developmental need they know what to do, who to turn to. • Parents understand the help that is available, how they can access it and they experience good, joined up responses from agencies. • Parents feel that they have contributed to the development of Early Years services through coproduction, consultation and engagement. • Parents are supported to be resilient and have strong networks of support. • Parents can access a good range of support advice and help in their local communities. • Parents feel empowered and have high expectations for their children and the future. • All staff are fully trained to understand the impact of complex social needs in the perinatal period and how to communicate with parents sensitively. • Parents have the confidence to ask for support with their relationships and have access to a range of provision from Early Years Services trained in positive relational practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively seek out opportunities to deliver help support and services in localities to improve accessibility and increase contacts with seldom heard communities. . • Actively seek out opportunities to link activity and support to VCF sector organisations to enable families to access help via familiar people in familiar environments. • All services and organisations to consider how we can further empower parents to feel confident to seek out help and support and consider how we can make this as easy as possible for parents. • To consider how we can better use the opportunities presented in the day-to-day contacts that settings and VCF sector have with families. • To further develop our Empowering Parents Empowering Communities offer to build supportive parental networks within communities. • Adopt principles of proportionate universalism (delivering services which are proportionate to needs in both scale and intensity) of the to identify and address needs antenatally of those parents at greater risk of poor maternal outcomes because of complex social factors . • Wherever possible ensure parents can access a range of family orientated antenatal/postnatal services in one place include targeted and specialist support. • Create a professional environment where we ask – ‘routine enquiry’ we ask about the relationship between not just the couple, but between the couple and their children, the children, boyfriends, girlfriends, step-children, other adults, we become curious about how ‘people get along’. This is positive relational practice.

Related strategies/plans and activity:



C.3 Shared Values and Principles

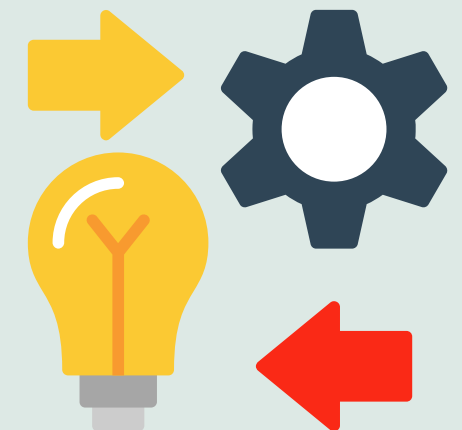
The values and principles below have been co-produced with key Early Help service leaders as part of the Early Help Review that took place 2020-2022, to describe the underlying approach we all commit to take in delivering services to families. Our Early Help and Early Years Strategy Values and Principles are aligned:

- Children and families will be at the centre of what we do
- We will listen to children and families and use their feedback to improve our communication and services where we can
- We will work, where possible, using a whole family approach
- We offer high quality advice and information to enable and empower families, taking a strengths-based approach to enable families to find their own solutions
- Children, young people and families can access consistent and appropriate information to help them make choices
- We will intervene early in life and in the emergence of problems
- We deliver services to children's young people and families within their communities
- We will work together and develop multi-agency integrated services
- We will focus on outcomes and provide value for money
- We will limit the number of professionals' families have to tell their story to
- We will use data to inform service improvements
- We are committed to sharing information with partners to improve services for children



C.4 Implementation

We can see that we have a multitude of interrelated strategies, plans and activity in the city, all striving to improve outcomes for Babies, Children and Families. All of the above have their own implementation plans. With this in mind, the implementation of this strategy is strongly dependent on the agreement of all stakeholders who are supporting and engaging with Early Years children and families in the city to participate, collaborate and contribute to achieving the ambitions of the strategy through working together as an Early Years and Early Help System as described in our detailed aims above.



C.5 Progress Monitoring and Measuring Impact

The Start for Life Sheffield, Early Years Strategy is intended as an overarching strategy which draws together the aims and ambitions of a number of the current related strategies and plans outlined in section B.2. The strategy straddles activity across the Early Years system in Education, Health and Care sectors. As such, there are significant interdependencies related to its progress and rather than produce an additional plan, the priorities and aims of the strategy will progress via the action plan activities of those strategies.

Impact: What does success look like?

By 2028:



The importance of good quality Early Years services and provision is championed and promoted by stakeholders, leaders and Elected Members.



Strategic policy and planning for Sheffield families, children and parents is considered from pre-birth in every case.



Collaborative approaches are further developed, particularly with the voluntary sector, in order to provide locality working and workforce development opportunities.



Working together across agencies has measurable benefits for families with Health and SEND needs and for parents and children with protected characteristics.



The city has sufficient capacity to manage Funded Early Learning statutory requirements.



Developed activity and plans across Early Years support the city response to the cost-of-living crisis.



Parents feel engaged in the development of services for Early Years children, co-production is commonplace and parents feel supported and listened to.



Parents feel that they have access to services which meet their particular needs.



We will see improvements in health and education outcomes, particularly in areas of deprivation where we have significant disparity

Data related to the above success criteria along with regular feedback and evaluation information will be used to demonstrate progress towards our ambitions.

C.6 Governance Arrangements

The strategy will be managed via the Family Hubs Programme Board and will be monitored by the Early Help Partnership Board. A data dashboard will be provided quarterly, along with a quarterly update report which will be presented to the Early Help Partnership Board and provided to the Children and Young Peoples Delivery Group. Annual progress reports will be provided to relevant groups and networks including the Early Years Provider Network and the Inclusion Task force. The voice of parents/carers will be part of the on-going evaluation monitoring and implementation of the strategy.



C.7 Data Sources

The Sheffield picture data sources

- (1) Fingertips
- (2) Local Authority Interactive Tool
- (3) Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 Sheffield LSOA - MHCLG
- (4) Health state life expectancies, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
- (5) Child Health Profiles (phe.org.uk)Age (arcgis.com)
- (6) Children in low-income families, Department for Work and Pensions (2020)
- (7) Sheffield-Safe-Accommodation-Needs-Assessment-2021-FINAL.pdf (sheffielddact.org.uk)
- (8) https://sheffield.communityinsight.org/?indicator=id19_homelessness_20150601#
- (9) E08000019 (phe.org.uk)
- (10) Breast for the best (shorthandstories.com)
- (11) PHE 2019



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